

Testimony Supporting

H.B. 6932: An Act Concerning Paid Family and Medical Leave

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Labor and Public Employees Committee

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Senator Winfield, Representative Tercyak and Members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee:

I am the Advocacy Director of Connecticut Voices for Children, a research-based public education and advocacy organization that works statewide to promote the well-being of Connecticut's children, youth, and families. My colleague Sarah Iverson is a policy fellow at Voices for Children.

We are testifying in support of H.B. 6932, An Act Concerning Paid Family and Medical Leave. At the outset I would like to mention that prior to my employment at Voices for Children, I had a long career as a legal aid lawyer for Connecticut Legal Services, Inc. in New Britain, where I represented parents – mostly mothers – who struggled to hold down low-wage jobs while caring for children – some with serious and chronic illnesses – or caring for their own parents suffering from ill health. They of course could not afford to take time off to attend to their families' needs without immediately jeopardizing their livelihoods. For this reason and those set forth below, we applaud the Committee for raising H.B. 6932, which will go a long way of easing the burden on such families by allowing them to use paid family and medical leave so they can care for their children or other family members.

Paid Family Leave is Smart Policy for the Growth and Development of Infants and Newly Adopted Children

Family medical leave enables parents to spend crucial time with their newly born infant or newly adopted child. Research shows that paid parental leave leads to a host of positive life outcomes for both generations, including decreased infant mortality,¹ decreased child behavioral problems,² increased rates of breastfeeding duration,³ and decreased rates of maternal post-partum depression.⁴ Bonds formed in the first twelve weeks of a child's life are critical for her long-term success; children begin building vital brain architecture from the time they are born, developing language and vocabulary skills, hand-eye coordination, and motor coordination.⁵ Current research shows that the quality of children's interactions and experiences, starting from birth, "determine

1 See, Christopher Ruhm, "Parental Leave and Child Health," The National Bureau of Economic Research (May 1998), available at <http://www.nber.org/papers/w6554> .

2 See, Lawrence Berger, et al, "Maternity Leave, early maternal employment, and child health development in the US," The Economic Journal (January 2005), available at <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.0013-0133.2005.00971.x/pdf> .

3 See, Michael Baker and Kevin Milligan, "Maternal employment, breastfeeding, and health: Evidence from maternity leave mandates," Journal of Health Economics (June 2008), available at <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0167629608000131> .

4 See, Janet Shibley Hyde, et al, "Maternity Leave and Women's Mental Health," Psychology of Women Quarterly (July 2006), available at <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1471-6402.1995.tb00291.x/abstract> .

5 See, Paula Wiggins, "Infant Brain Development," Texas Child Care (Spring 2000), available at http://www.childcarequarterly.com/pdf/spring00_braindev.pdf .

their emotional, social, and intellectual development."⁶ By giving parents time to develop high-quality, secure attachments with their new child, family medical leave plays an important role in nurturing healthy child development in the long-term.

Paid Family and Medical Leave is a Smart Two-Generation Approach to Improving Family Well-Being

H.B. 6932 is a smart two-generation strategy that takes into account the fact that children do well when families do well. Often, workers lacking paid family and medical leave hold low-income and/or multiple part-time jobs, and so cannot afford to take time off.⁷ Of workers who took time off with reduced or no pay, 15% went on public assistance, 30% borrowed money, 36% put off paying bills, and 31% cut their leave short.⁸ Thirty percent reported that making ends meet while on medical leave was "very difficult," and another 32% reported it was somewhat difficult.⁹ By giving these parents the opportunity to take off work to care for their child without loss of employment or wages, family medical leave strengthens families' economic stability. The Two-Generation Policy Workgroup recommends supporting family leave policies, in recognition that the family is a single unit whose needs must be addressed in tandem.¹⁰

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of H.B. 6932.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have questions or need additional information. We can be reached at slanger@ctvoices.org and siverson@ctvoices.org, and by telephone at 203.498.4240.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ See, Liz Ben-Ishai, "In Focus: Sick Days and Family Medical Leave," CLASP (February 2015), available at <http://www.clasp.org/issues/work-life-and-job-quality/in-focus?topic=sick-days-and-family-medical-leave>.

⁸ See, Jacob Klerman, Kelly Daley, and Alyssa Pozniak, "Family and Medical Leave in 2012: Technical Report," US Department of Labor, (updated February 4, 2013), available at: <http://www.dol.gov/ekeykey.net/asp/evaluation/fmla/FMLATechnicalReport.pdf>, 106

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ See, Elaine Zimmermann, "A Two Generational Approach: Helping Children Work and Parents Thrive," Two Generation Policy Workgroup (December 2014), available at http://www.cga.ct.gov/coc/PDFs/two-gen/2015-02-03_report_FINAL.pdf.